



AMAZONTRAIL BY LEE LYNCH

Gay Grandmas

AT ONE TIME PLACING THOSE TWO words together, grandma and dyke, would have been inconceivable to me. The concept of lesbian mothers was just as foreign. It never occurred to me, in the 1960s, that lesbians had kids, much less grandkids. We were femme, butch or kiki, had nothing to do with male breeders and were, above all, young. It was hard enough when, in my thirties, a friend just a little older than me became a grandmother, but at least she was straight. Well, we did kiss once, but she really did love her husband and four kids and she wasn't a grandma at that point. In any case, that was a terrible shock, getting to the age where a peer could physiologically be a grandmother. About ten years later, I made a new gay friend and it turned out that she was a grandma a few times over. However, her son wouldn't let his kids near their grandmother because she was queer. She eventually moved across the country to be with a lover. I've wondered if, before she died of cancer a few years later, her son let the grandkids meet her. I suppose it's always been hard to be a gay grandma, but back in the days of the universal closet, no one talked about it. The family knew only that Grandma had a "friend" who was always invited for the holidays. Maybe the grandkids called her Auntie Jo and the kids described her as a horse-riding kind of woman and maybe the grandkids loved her and her horses and when Auntie Jo moved in with Grandma, the kids were just relieved to have someone watching out for mom, especially someone as handy as Jo was, fixing Grandma's roof or toilet and teaching the grandkids to ride.

Some grandmothers have it easier. I knew two women who'd been best friends all their lives and finally left their husbands for each other. One of them had a grown daughter who'd never married. When mom and daughter finally came out to each other it was a joyous day. The daughter married her girlfriend, Mom looking on, and started a family. This was yet another eye-opener for me, a lesbian grandmother whose daughter was a lesbian mother. I'd love to hear how the grandbaby turned out.

I suppose one reason I'm still trying to get used to the grandma dyke phenomenon is that the whole notion of having kids was always repugnant to me. My photographer friend went to a gathering of women the other day and called me afterward. "All they talked about was their grandchildren!" she reported. When one of the women commented that she didn't even like kids, the photographer agreed, saying, "What's so amazing about having grandchildren!" She said that her comment was greeted with dead silence and the subject changed right after that.

Now, the photographer is not gay, nor was anyone in her group. She chose never to have children, citing overpopulation and lack of interest. Just about anyone, we commiserated, can make a bit of protoplasm - and just about anyone does this rather frequently. What's the

endless fascination with baby humans? I have no objection to the lesbian baby boom, but now it's a straight friend who seems to think most like me.

I'd managed to stay away from the maternal crowd until I fell for my late partner. Marcia had two daughters. One has step children and the other has a nine-year old and another on the way. I told Marcia right off the bat that I hadn't a clue



"I suppose it's always been hard to be a gay grandma, but back in the days of the universal closet, no one talked about it. The family knew only that Grandma had a "friend" who was always invited for the holidays."

how to relate to a lover's kids. She just left the subject alone. These young women were used to their mom having a partner. Little by little, especially during Marcia's illness, I got to know her daughters. It's funny, but those relationships feel different from anything I ever experienced before. It's not that I feel mom-ish toward them, or even Aunt Jo-ish toward their children. I don't spend holidays with them. I don't send birthday presents to the kids. But there's something more, and less, than friendship.

Earlier today, I was talking with the pianist and the handy dyke about gay grandmas. I insisted that both members of a couple we know are grandmothers, although only one of them meets the biological definition. The pianist blew me away when she blithely asked, "Doesn't that make you a lesbian grandmother too?"

Inconceivable. ▼

THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE
WILLIAM COIL
 NATIONALLY CERTIFIED MASSAGE THERAPIST

Deep Muscle Therapy • Sports Massage
 Chronic Pain Management • Stress Management

Practice limited to male clientele.
 Gift Certificates Available: \$40/1 hour • \$60/1 1/2 hours

802.658.2390 • 800.830.5025

Fabulous, Fun, Value = Cruising!

Call about our new Honeymoon Registry!

The Isaacs Group
 Barre VT
www.866deckchair.com

TollFree: 866.332.5242
 (866-deckchair)
 CLIA 802.476.0808

CRUISEONE.
 #1 In Cruising, Nationwide

IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TESTED, OR IF YOU'VE HAD UNPROTECTED SEX OR SHARED A NEEDLE SINCE YOUR LAST TEST, NOW IS THE TIME TO GET AN HIV TEST. IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TESTED, OR IF YOU'VE HAD UNPROTECTED SEX OR SHARED A NEEDLE SINCE YOUR LAST TEST, NOW IS THE TIME TO GET AN HIV TEST. IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TESTED, OR IF YOU'VE HAD UNPROTECTED SEX OR SHARED A NEEDLE SINCE YOUR LAST TEST, NOW IS THE TIME TO GET AN HIV TEST. IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TESTED, OR IF YOU'VE HAD UNPROTECTED SEX OR SHARED A NEEDLE SINCE YOUR LAST TEST, NOW IS THE TIME TO GET AN HIV TEST.

It's better to know

YOU CAN GET HEALTH CARE AND TREATMENT IF YOU TEST POSITIVE.

For information on HIV testing:

- call toll-free from in Vermont
800-882-AIDS (800-882-2437)*
- for hearing impaired TTY access
800-319-3141*
- or visit us on-line at
<http://www.healthyvermonters.info>

* The Vermont AIDS Hotline is open weekdays, 8:30-4:30. (For information 24/7, call the National AIDS Hotline 800-342-2437.)

Take the TEST. Take CONTROL.

VERMONT
 DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH